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Directorate of
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CIA/ALA LAR 83-010

Latin America Review

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23 May 1983

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Although US certification for a resumption of military sales and assistance is important to Chile's national security interests, President Pinochet is unlikely to make major concessions to obtain a lifting of the ban.

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Articles have been coordinated as appropriate with other offices within CIA. Comments and queries regarding this publication may be directed to the Chief, Production Staff, Office of African and Latin American Analysis, telephone

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Chile: The Issue of US Certification

The possibility that the United States might certify Argentina for a resumption of military sales and assistance while continuing to withhold certification for Chile initially prompted Chilean President Pinochet last fall to take steps to improve his regime's image on human rights issues. Pinochet continued to balk, however, at extraditing the persons indicted by a US grand jury for the Letelier/Moffit murders in 1976, and this has impeded certification. Frustrated by his overall lack of progress at obtaining US certification, Pinochet in February fired Foreign Minister Rojas—who had pushed for moderate reform—and backpedaled on some other initiatives. Nonetheless, the certification question remains important for Chile's national security interests, and thus keeps alive the chance that Pinochet will consider some adjustments on human rights and the pace of transition to civilian rule. However, in view of Pinochet's clear determination to give priority to internal security over international considerations, we do not expect any major concessions

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Certification Requirements and Benefits

To lift the ban on US arms sales and military assistance to Chile, the Reagan administration must certify to the US Congress that Chile:

- Has made significant progress in complying with internationally recognized principles of human rights.
- Is not aiding and abetting international terrorism.
- Has fully cooperated in bringing to justice those indicted by a US grand jury in connection with the Letelier/Moffit murders in Washington.

In addition to the military benefits that would accrue to Chile from certification, the regime's international image—and perhaps creditworthiness—would improve

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To achieve these benefits, Pinochet undertook at least three initiatives during last fall:

- He sought to improve Chile's human rights image by stressing—in diplomatic contacts and the media—that his government is adhering to its timetable for returning the country to civilian rule in the 1990s. In line with this, he appointed a commission to study constitutional laws and gave approval for a private political institute to explore possible direct election of municipal and regional councils that would elect a national congress.

- Santiago publicized the work of a high-level government commission that studied the problems of Chile's exiles and took under advisement the commission's recommendations for the return of some 400 exiles.

- Chile courted Washington by supporting many US positions in the 1982 UN General Assembly and in other international and regional organizations. Moreover, as the only South American nation to participate with the United States in the 1982 UNITAS naval exercises, Chile resisted a post-Falklands regional trend.

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These efforts were followed by what Pinochet and his ministers regarded as several signs of improving relations with the United States. Chilean Foreign Minister Schweitzer described his meetings in March with Secretary of State Shultz as "very positive."

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Pinochet's Response

Considering his efforts and what he viewed as positive US responses, we believe Pinochet was disappointed by the failure of the Reagan administration to certify Chile in the "lameduck" session of the US Congress. We also suspect that he was upset at the extension in December 1982 of the UN's mandate to examine Chile's human rights record. As a result, Pinochet backtracked somewhat in early 1983. He fired Foreign Minister Rojas, who had been a proponent of continuing the reforms. He disbanded the exile commission and called for a slowdown in the study on transition to civilian rule. These moves, in turn, strengthened cabinet hardliners and disappointed Chileans who had hoped that the government was becoming more flexible.

Regional security concerns are, nonetheless, keeping alive the possibility that Pinochet will take additional measures to gain renewed US military assistance. One consideration is that arch rival Argentina, already militarily superior, may be certified and thus have easier access to US weapons. Pinochet is especially concerned that this would tip the balance in favor of Buenos Aires in the longstanding Beagle Channel dispute. Chilean Government officials may also view the certification of Argentina alone as inherently unfair, since they removed from power a Marxist government, adopted free market economic policies, and believe they have a better human rights record than the Argentine Government, which Chile believes behaved irresponsibly in the Falklands conflict and has been more open with the Soviets. Finally, although Chile has been able to obtain equipment from non-US suppliers since 1976, it believes the US embargo is now undermining its defensive capabilities at a time when it needs to counter military buildups not only in Argentina, but also in Peru. The inability to obtain spare parts for their US-built F5s—Chile's frontline interceptors—is especially disturbing to military officials.

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Outlook

We doubt that Pinochet will make major human rights and political concessions, because he:

- Believes rapid democratization would breed chaos.
- Is facing increasing economic and political pressures in 1983 and, in view of his past record, is more likely to respond with tougher policies than concessions.

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- May come to believe that certification will depend on his extradition of former Directorate of National Intelligence agents—including Manuel Contreras—who are charged in the Letelier/Moffit case. In our view, this is something that he is very unlikely to do.

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If Argentina alone is certified, we expect a strongly nationalistic reaction from many sectors of Chilean society. Pinochet's siege mentality would be aggravated, and existing anti-American feeling among junior officers would intensify. Chile probably would pull out of the 1983 UNITAS exercises and seek more military training and arms from Britain, Israel, South Africa, and other non-Communist sources. Santiago would be inclined to adopt more anti-US positions on international issues and become less responsive to human rights pressures.

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Certification for Argentina and not for Chile also could have important domestic consequences. The position of moderates in the government who have argued for progress in human rights would be weakened as Pinochet turned to a harder line. Advocates of a more "nationalist" economic policy could be strengthened, while labor and human rights groups, which depend on US moral support to bolster their positions, probably would come under greater pressure from the regime.

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